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ABSTRACT

These four monographs on the education of the gifted and the talented were prepared by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Monograph #1 addresses the questions of who the gifted and talented are and why they need special programs. Monograph #2 concerns staff involvement, and covers such topics as staff development, the role of the specialist-coordinator, teacher selection, the role of administration, the regular classroom teacher, support staff, and communication. Monograph #3, on parent involvement, concentrates on forming action groups such as the Wisconsin Council for the Gifted and Talented, which is dedicated to fostering a climate in the home and school that allows each child to reach his or her fullest potential. Also covered in this monograph are meeting individual needs and promoting community awareness. Monograph #4 discusses starting a program for the gifted and talented, and addresses itself to such aspects as program development, identification, student needs assessment, and counseling. (DLS)

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WISCONSIN MONOGRAPHS

ON

EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

MONOGRAPH #1

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Who Are They?

Why Do They Need Special Programs?

Major Writer: Serene Rubin

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Barbara Thompson, Ph.D., State Superintendent

Thomas F. Diener, Supervisor, Gifted and Talented Programs

EC 120545

These monographs were prepared by the Department of Public Instruction in collaboration with the Wisconsin Association of Educators of Gifted and Talented. The views presented are those of the major author(s) of each monograph and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Department of Public Instruction. The set of monographs, which may be expanded later, presently includes the following:

#1 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Who Are They?
Why Do They Need Special Programs?

#2 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Staff Involvement

#3 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Parent Involvement

#4 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Starting a Program
Screening and Identification

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Bulletin No. 8247

Who Are the Gifted and Talented?

There are many ideas and perceptions of what constitutes the gifted and talented. The history of mankind is filled with accounts of contributions made by gifted and talented men and women who have proven themselves through their accomplishments. Gifted and talented youngsters have the potential to excel--to become tomorrow's outstanding thinkers, creators and leaders. Definition of the gifted and talented seems to depend on who is doing the defining. The differences in definition are reminiscent of a passage from Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking Glass when Humpty Dumpty says in a rather scornful tone, "When I used a word it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less." For many years, giftedness was considered the ability to make a high score on an intelligence test and to function at a high level in academic areas commensurate with that intellectual ability. More recently the major conceptions of giftedness have broadened into the consideration of superior intellectual ability, superior creative ability and/or superior talent in a variety of human activities.

Before identification can take place, there must be definition. Examination of some of the widely accepted definitions demonstrates the lack of agreement.

John Gowan differentiates between giftedness and talent in this definition:

> "A gifted child is one who has the potential to develop verbal creativity," and "A talented child is one who has the potential to develop non-verbal creativity."

Calvin Taylor's definition addresses the multi-talent concept. His totem pole illustration with separate categories for each of six components of ability--academic, creative, wisdom, planning, forecasting, and communication--exhibits the multi-talent nature of giftedness.

Paul Witty's definition has been widely used:

> "A child is regarded as gifted when he frequently exhibits noteworthy performance in a worthwhile type of human behavior."

The United States Commissioner of Education in his 1971 Report to the Congress of the United States defines these children as:

> "those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination:
>
> 1) general intellectual ability
>
> 2) specific academic aptitude
>
> 3) creative or productive thinking
>
> 4) leadership ability
>
> 5) visual and performing arts
>
> 6) psychomotor ability."[1]

The specific areas may be further defined as follows:[2]

1) general intellectual ability refers to those students who have high academic achievement or potential in a specific field of study;

2) specific academic aptitude refers to those students who have high academic achievement or potential in a specific field of study;

[1]Sidney Marland, Education of the Gifted and Talented (report to the Subcommittee on Education, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 1972) p. 3.

[2]Guidelines for Gifted and Talented Programs (Idaho State Board of Education, 1975), p. 2.

3) creative or productive thinking refers to those students who have advanced insight, outstanding imagination, intense interest in one or more fields of achievement, innovative or creative reasoning ability, ability in problem solving and high attainment in original or creative thinking;

4) leadership ability refers to those students who have been observed to be "natural" leaders, those who are looked upon by their peers as being leaders, those who have demonstrated leadership through specific school activities, and those who have demonstrated leadership in non-academic activities;

5) visual or performing arts refers to those students who have demonstrated or indicated through affective as well as cognitive performance outstanding ability in areas such as art, music, drama, speech, and language;

6) psychomotor ability refers to those students who have demonstrated high ability or attainment in areas such as sculpturing, mechanics, surgical medicine, athletics, etc.

This definition should not be interpreted to mean that ALL children and youth are gifted and talented in one area or another. In fact the proportion of the school-age population judged to be gifted or talented ranges only from the three to five percent estimated in the Report to Congress to ten percent under the most liberal of definitions. Gifted and talented children and youth are therefore a unique population differing from their peers in abilities,

interests, talents and maturity. We know that gifted students learn rapidly, have outstanding abilities and are capable of high performance. This potential, though, is not always recognized in children or fully realized in their adulthood. These are individuals with a complex array of talents, who grow in different ways and who need special intervention for their optimum development.

Why Do the Gifted and Talented Need Special Programs?

The misconception that gifted children will make it on their own has done much to discourage special programs. While many of them are successful, there is no way of knowing how much more they might have accomplished with appropriate education. Their presence among the dropout population indicates that many of them do not make it at all.

The human potential for leadership and creative talent which characterizes gifted and talented youth should be reason enough to provide appropriate educational experiences for them. Failure to challenge and develop these young people deprives both the individual and the nation of one of our most valuable resources.

The educational system is philosophically committed to developing individuals to their fullest potential.

The Vermont Design for Education states: "The school's function is to expand the differences between individuals and create a respect for those differences." Identical programs for all individuals coming into the educational system does not serve to expand differences.

It is not usually necessary for able children to take the same approach to learning which is appropriate for other students. Many of them are capable of "intuitive leaps" which may eliminate the need for the usual sequenced learning. Options for "testing out" of some required courses as well as enrollment in advanced placement courses should be available.

Qualitatively different programs designed for the gifted and talented will provide fewer experiences at the cognitive level since these children

are already knowledgeable in many areas. Appropriate programs will focus on higher levels of thinking, including emphasis on synthesis and evaluation.

A fact sheet from the United States Office of Education summarizes the need for programming for the gifted and talented:

> "Without identification, stimulation, and guidance, the contributions of the gifted and talented can be lost to us forever for they cannot survive educational neglect and apathy. We need their talents, their degrees of difference. Therefore, the gifted and talented need to be identified, sifted out of the mass."

WISCONSIN MONOGRAPHS

ON

EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

MONOGRAPH #2

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Staff Involvement

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EC120545

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THE STAFF

Staff Development

In regard to the development of a total, comprehensive program for the gifted/talented, there is no doubt that a strong staff development component is mandatory. Any change, no matter how minute, must have the active support of teachers.

For this reason, the staff development component of a gifted/talented program must satisfy the needs of teachers as well as the perceived needs of a program administrator. This concept is a reflection of the inservice requirement found in Chapter 90 of the Wisconsin Laws of 1973.

Inservices can deal with various aspects of gifted/talented education, ranging from an awareness of characteristics and identification to the development of learning alternatives and program evaluation.

The manner in which staff development is implemented again may vary. Formal sessions with many faculty members participating has proven to be an effective way to deal with the "basics", such as characteristics, identification, and theoretical frameworks. However, when a district is in a beginning implementation phase, the most effective way to handle staff development is to arrange small, informal discussion groups in which teachers may deal with the many issues in a more "participatory" fashion. It is most important to point out that any inservice education component which is conducive to helping teachers is one which operates on a continuous basis throughout the school year.

Role of the Specialist-Coordinator

The varying size, enrollments and programmatic outlook of Wisconsin's 436 school districts will shape the parameters of the role of the gifted/talented specialist-coordinator. This person may be (a) employed full-time with the program;

(b) given release time to manage these efforts; or (c) assigned this duty in addition to other responsibilities. Regardless of the set-up, it is important to realize that one person must ultimately assume the responsibility for program effectiveness.

Therefore, some of the possible roles a district may assign to a specialist-coordinator are:

1) Develop and maintain a system of communications for program dissemination (newsletters, inservices, etc.)
2) Coordinate and implement an identification component
3) Serve as a resource person
4) Work directly with identified gifted/talented children
5) Prepare a community resource and mentor file
6) Work with parent advisory groups
7) Assist regular classroom teachers in the selection of appropriate educational experiences for identified students
8) Keep all pertinent records on identified students
9) Keep the Board of Education apprised as to program progress
10) Develop and maintain a professional library of references and classroom material
11) Monitor and evaluate the gifted/talented program

This list certainly does not attempt to include all of the possible duties of a specialist-coordinator; however, it does provide a starting point for districts.

Teacher Selection

The teacher and the teacher's qualifications are the key to success of any program for the gifted/talented. As in any other program, administrative arrangements, materials and other resources are largely meaningless unless the teacher can provide the necessary catalytic ingredients. Teacher qualifications and

abilities are primary factors in planning successful learning alternatives for the gifted and talented.

The literature is replete with lists of desirable characteristics of teachers of the gifted and talented. In general terms, a successful teacher of the gifted and talented is one who has wide-ranging interests and possesses the intellectual curiosity characteristic of a person who enjoys learning. Similarly, studies have shown that these teachers tend to be more student-centered, stimulating in the classroom, and supportive of special programming to meet unique individual needs. The teacher of the gifted and talented must be prepared to accept the fact that he/she may be neither as bright nor as knowledgeable about certain fields as are the pupils. Indeed, this teacher must take exceptional pride in the accomplishments of the student and marshal any needed outside resources which can help to provide for the student's needs.

The selection of this type of individual may indeed be difficult. Through various processes, such as interviews, observations and recommendations, the person or people responsible for teacher selection must try to determine if the candidate possesses some of the exemplary traits mentioned above. In many cases the selection will become complex; however, it is mandatory to choose the teacher who can provide the maximum challenge for these special youngsters.

Role of Administration

The articulation of roles in a program for the gifted/talented is exceedingly important. This is especially true for members of the administration team.

Central office administration must be willing to provide staff time to implement and support all identification and program development activities. In addition, administration can insure a qualitatively different experience by supporting material acquisition, inservice training and evaluation as related to the gifted/talented program. The coordinating role of central office staff is not to be underestimated.

Building principals need to consider the following responsibilities:

1) Become knowledgeable about the unique needs of the gifted and talented.
2) Stimulate interest in the gifted and talented throughout the school and community.
3) Cooperate with program people in identifying gifted and talented students and implementing programs for them.
4) Encourage excellence not only in athletic areas, but also in all endeavors in which youngsters may achieve high performance.
5) Meet with parents of gifted/talented students.
6) Aid in the evaluation of the program.

Regular Classroom Teacher

The role of the regular classroom teacher will vary, depending upon the type of program provided for gifted and talented youngsters. Regardless of the responsibilities, it is necessary for every teacher to understand the unique needs of these children.

If the program is designed to be contained within the regular classroom, the teacher will assume the role of facilitator and resource person for the gifted and talented. The program will, of course, be limited by the numbers of children in the classroom, time, facilities, type of community and other factors. In such a situation the teacher should allow for as much individualization as possible (after providing extensive research skills). In addition, the teacher will need to provide appropriate materials and evaluative guidelines to facilitate measuring of pupil progress.

The program developed by a district may be one in which gifted and talented students are placed in some specialized learning situation for a period of time. In this case, the regular classroom teacher must act as a transitional agent. That is, he/she must help the gifted and talented student to adapt to the change from the special learning situation to the regular classroom. This will involve a

close monitoring of social and curricular articulation. In turn, the classroom teacher must continue to be cognizant of the child's need to be continually challenged. The regular classroom teacher has an ideal opportunity to capitalize upon the unique learning activities experienced by the gifted and talented students by sharing them with all students. This fact behooves the regular classroom teacher to remain continually apprised of the strategies being employed in the extra-classroom situation.

Support Staff

District support staff, guidance personnel, psychologists, social workers, reading specialists and others are in an excellent position to aid in the implementation of a program for the gifted and talented. Specialists are trained to recognize, diagnose, and prescribe alternatives to meet unique educational, social, and behavioral needs. Therefore, they should naturally have much to add to any type of program for the gifted and talented.

Specialists should be at the cutting edge of the screening and identification process. Their recognition of unique characteristics and experience with testing/measurement will allow the district to make a smooth entry into any student selection process.

Similarly, these individuals are experienced in prescribing alternatives to meet the special needs of children. This process of developing highly specialized learning alternatives could be extrapolated to the gifted and talented program.

Communication

A concomitant to program development is the development of a plan for introducing not only staff but students and parents to the program. A series of meetings which promote an awareness and understanding of the program for the gifted and talented is vital. Structuring formal or informal occasions where people are able to listen and react to the purposes and mechanics of the program will generate enthusiasm and will help to establish a commitment to the programs.

It is extremely important that all opportunities for staff input and dialog be coordinated so that there is consistency in what is being communicated about the program. Because no one person will be available continuously to provide information about the program, it is important that key individuals within the district thoroughly understand the program.

The amount of effort expended in communicating and publicizing the program increases the potential for the program to become an integral part of the district. Communicating is an ongoing process which should include personal and written contacts throughout the school year. Some possible communication tools are:

1) Brochures
2) Newsletters
3) News release
4) Speakers

The availability of some type of visual presentation which can be transported and shared at various meetings is helpful. In addition, consideration must be given to the use of students as spokespersons for their program.

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WISCONSIN MONOGRAPHS

ON

EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

MONOGRAPH #3

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Parent Involvement

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EC 130545

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PARENT INVOLVEMENT

The realities of giftedness often leave parents perplexed. Initial pleasure of acknowledging the child's gifts often turns to frustration and frequently bitterness upon discovering that far too few school districts are committed to serving the needs of these very special children.

Traditionally, parents have been reluctant to involve themselves in the educational process, believing that "Educators are the professionals", and "They know what's best for my child." Unfortunately, this attitude often diverts the parents from the realities and responsibilities that they inevitably must face.

PARENT - EDUCATOR REALITIES

Reality #1 - Parents Do Have Expertise. Often parents are the first to identify their child as gifted. The day-to-day observations of the child's informal learning processes are valuable insights which augment the more formal classroom experience. ---Don't hesitate to share anecdotes about your child's collections, story writing, practical problem solving, inventions of codes and the like. Also, keep examples of artwork to share with the classroom teacher.

Reality #2 - Educators Cannot Carry the Whole Burden. It is illogical to expect the school district to develop a comprehensive program without strong parental and community support because they, too, face that pervasive and prevailing cliché: "The gifted can make it on their own." Too often, enthusiastic educators have seen their work for the gifted disappear at the first budget crunch due to a lack of parental awareness and participation.

Reality #3 - When Both Parents and Educators Work to Effect Positive Changes--Good Things Can Happen. One example in Wisconsin is the school district of Greenfield. During a 14-month joint effort of Greenfield educators and the

Greenfield Citizens for the Gifted and Talented, a program was developed. While the educators concentrated on such matters as curricular development, professional inservices, and programming, the parent support and involvement included: supplemental materials, funds, transportation, resource people and parent inservices. This unified effort has also produced a sound working relationship between enthusiastic educators and parents as refinements are being made in the program's evolution.

Reality #4 - Group Action is Much More Effective Than Individual Interest and Concern. In Wisconsin we are fortunate to have a state-wide organization which is a stimulus for more concentrated local action. Organized in 1974, the Wisconsin Council for the Gifted and Talented is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering a climate in the home and school that allows each child to reach his or her fullest potential. The Council now numbers among its membership parents, educators, social workers, students, school psychologists, administrators, medical professionals, and many others from the general community who view the maximal development of talent as a necessity for each individual and for the society as a whole.

Membership in the Council is open to all concerned with the quality of education in our state--particularly the quality of education offered those children who represent our best hope for the future, the gifted and talented. The Wisconsin Council has encouraged the formation of parent groups so that local needs can be met. Due to the rapid growth of these chapters, it is best to write the Council for a current listing.

Sometimes parents are reluctant to unify and act as a group due to concerns about how it would affect their child, the educational process, or themselves--or simply because they are unable to envision the activities and mechanics of such action.

PARENT CONCERNS ABOUT GROUP ACTION

Could It Have A Negative Effect On My Child? This is a very real fear of many parents although it is probably unfounded, for, in actuality, parents and educators have the same over-riding concern that the child's best interests are served. If it still is an inhibiting factor, a group may consider keeping its membership list private. Furthermore, by being an organized group working toward the benefit of all gifted children rather than highlighting individual complaints, this fear will be alleviated. In the beginning, it may be necessary to reaffirm this by such statements as "I'm not here as Susie's parent, I'm here as a representative of the Centerville Association for the Gifted and Talented."

Would a Group Interfere with the Educational Process? Successful groups realize that quality programming takes a reasonable amount of time and that it is not the parents' function to teach or to administrate, but instead to positively encourage implementation by those who can. There may be some initial apprehension by the school district, but that will be alleviated as the group's expertise becomes a source of reliable and valuable input.

How Will I Be Viewed For Starting a Group? Perceptions change as situations change. For example, when a group makes a resource list for a school district, they are called "those priceless volunteers". When they begin asking hard questions about gifted, they may be called "pushy parents". However, some administrators and teachers will be thrilled that someone has taken the initiative to make their task easier. Similar perceptions by the community at large also change, varying with the locale and timing. It eventually balances out as the sincerity of your efforts to be of real service becomes more apparent.

Actually, rather than being a negative experience, a group can help meet the parents' individual needs, support the schools, and help make programming a reality.

FUNCTIONS AND ACTIVITIES OF A GROUP

Meeting Individual Needs - A group can be a forum to alleviate your concerns stemming from your child's extra abilities, i.e., the developmental processes, sibling relationships, and other needs. (Who else but another parent in a similar situation might really "understand"?) Group discussions can be useful to gather ideas for constructive and productive parent-educator dialogues. A group can also directly help your child by providing enrichment activities relating to special interests. It can be a clearinghouse for useful publications of activity ideas. Some popular ones are: (1) Everyday Enrichment for Gifted Children by Herbert Kanigher, (2) Yellow Pages of Learning Resources, The MIT Press, (3) Celebrate the City, Girl Scouts of Milwaukee Area, and (4) How to Help Your Gifted Child by Gina Ginsberg.

Supporting the Schools - A parent group for the gifted can have a positive impact on the total educational environment. Many ideas and resources that stem from group functions can be imaginatively applied to other civic groups or activities which have a broader audience. A few examples might be:

1) Offer to develop a Junior Guide Program with the local Ecology or Historical Center.
2) Work with the P.T.O. on school activities which are attractive to gifted. (Some examples: collector expositions, hobby shows, talent shows, Saturday programs featuring "Mr. Wizard" type speakers.)
3) Compile or update a resource list of interesting community members who can share their talents and experiences with large and/or small groups of students.
4) Build a noon activities program. If the lunch hour is long enough, provide parents to play chess, tape stories, etc., as an alternative to outdoor recess during the cold months.

Promoting Community Awareness - One of the primary functions of a beginning parent group is to research the topic of giftedness for their own use, and to share the results to build community awareness. Guest speakers have wide appeal and can be very effective. Maximum benefit can be derived by arranging local press coverage and inviting local school, administrative, and board representatives. A summary can be made available to key absentees. A tape can be made which would be available to the community. A copy could be donated to the local library.

Another research/awareness mechanism involves the local library. A group can make a selective bibliography of the library's current gifted selections and suggest titles for future purchases. Donations of books and magazine subscriptions are usually very welcome. A key book would be Teaching the Gifted Child by James Gallagher. Periodicals include Gifted Child Quarterly and G/C/T (Gifted, Creative, Talented Child).

Making Programming a Reality - The more research parents have done, the more anxiety they have for programs to be implemented--NOW. The following activities are often viewed as "pressure", but can also be viewed as "creative tension" which can result in the shift from interest to action by the school district.

It is absolutely essential that you know and understand as much about the operations of your school district as you do about the needs of the gifted. Teachers can change a classroom, principals can change a school, but changes with commitment and continuity require district-wide decisions and actions. Identifying and motivating the people within the power structure who really can make changes requires group meetings with school board members as well as administrators. (Note: Don't forget that the school board has been elected to represent you. Mistakenly, many groups initially approach them as members of central administration.)

Productive meetings begin with prior planning. Since beginning groups are often unsure of this procedure, some tried and true methods are detailed here:

1) Before the meeting:
   a) Avoid preconceived notions of the others' views.
   b) Submit a pre-planned agenda to insure that the topics of highest interest are covered, and that the participants have time to prepare.
   c) Prepare pertinent handouts.
   d) Practice statements at home.
   e) Anticipate responses and your reactions to them. (An example: Response--"We're doing a needs assessment on the gifted." Reaction--"That's great. Who's doing it? When will it be done? Can we have a copy? How can we help? If it says the needs aren't met, will there be a program?")
2) During the meeting:
   a) Speak for the group and community. (Avoid reference to your individual situation.)
   b) Present your views dispassionately.
   c) Tape or take accurate notes.
   d) If you are unfamiliar with educational jargon, ask for help or defer the question until the next meeting when you are better prepared.
3) After the meeting:
   a) Summarize and disseminate to participants and key absentees.
   b) Follow up on any statements made which suggest or require accountability. (An example: "We will set up a study group." Follow up: "Who's on the group? What aspects will be studied? When will the report be presented to

the board? What are their responsibilities and powers, etc.")*

The above functions and activities may sound as if they require intense effort by a large number of committed parents. Hard work? Yes! Large numbers? Not necessarily.

ESSENTIALS OF GROUP FORMATION

Can I Start a Group? Yes! Do not underestimate your own talents and abilities! Many groups in Wisconsin have been started by one person placing a news item announcing formation of a group in the local paper, church bulletin, school newsletter, etc. Also, community groups such as Jr. Women's Clubs, AAUW's, PTO's, League of Women Voters, etc. can assist in the formation of a parent group for the gifted and talented by providing initial meeting places, speakers, press access, seed money, and other encouragement.

What Are the Basics? -

1) Leader (or Co-leaders). The most important leadership quality is that of persistence. (Remember, educators and administrators are targets for educational fads--their first instinct might be to categorize gifted as a fad and simply wait until it goes away.) DON'T GO AWAY!

2) Writer. Someone in the group must be willing to write and disseminate announcements, summaries, letters to the editors, thank yous, etc. Reproduction of materials can be difficult and time consuming. Some national organizations will provide quantities of materials (examples: United States Office of Education, and The National Leadership Training Institute). Also, official chapters of the Wisconsin Council are supplied with handouts.

Note: *(Further mechanics of these activities are best described in Parents Organizing to Improve Schools by Happy Fernandez. See resource list.)

3) Funding. Most frequently, initial expenditures are for postage and coffee. This often comes from the founders' pockets--most are philosophical about this, saying "Oh, well, it's cheaper than private tuition." Eventually a more formal structure will be needed. Membership fees of $3.00-$5.00, and newsletters are the most common devices. Some groups have profited from liaisons with the treasuries of existing community organizations that have education committees. Others report that while fund raisers such as garage sales have taken extra time, they can be a lot of fun and thus give the extra dividend of building group spirit.

These components are widely considered to be the essentials of a beginning group. No reference to the total membership has been made since many of the most effective groups have been started by just a pair of hard workers who had the above resources and talents between them. If one of this pair is a man, progress may be swift. Sexist as it may sound, a visible male can make the difference between immediate attention and polite dismissal.

CONCLUSION

Remember that parents are not programmers, teachers, administrators, or board members but they do have expertise and have a crucial role in making positive changes. With a clear understanding of the parental role and group activities, aimless frustration and wishful thinking can be transformed into lasting benefits for gifted children. The importance of such action cannot be underestimated by either parents or educators. The history of education for the gifted is replete with spurts of brief attention, giving it the reputation of a recurrent fad. This time it's different--parent groups are involved--AND THEY'RE NOT GOING AWAY, because parents are learning that ALL THE EDUCATORS AND LEGISLATORS IN THE WORLD CANNOT PROVIDE FOR THEIR CHILD UNLESS THEY ARE WILLING TO HELP.

RESOURCE SHEET

Wisconsin Council for the Gifted and Talented
3621 West Allerton Avenue
Greenfield, WI 53221

Everyday Enrichment for Gifted Children at Home & School
By Herbert Kanigher. Publication #13. Cost $3.75 - make checks payable to: Ventura County Superintendent of Schools
County Office Building
Ventura, CA 93001
Attn: LTI Publications
(805) 648-6131, Ext. 2762

Yellow Pages of Learning Resources (Exploration of a city)
Request 1978 edition. Cost $1.95 plus 50¢ handling
The MIT Press
28 Carleton Street
Cambridge, MA 02142

Celebrate the City (Discover Milwaukee - 50 things to do.) Cost 50¢
Girl Scouts of Milwaukee Area, Inc.
2500 N. Mayfair Road
P.O. Box 26395
Milwaukee, WI 53226
(414) 476-1050

How to Help Your Gifted Child
Co-authored by Charles Harrison and Gina Ginsberg. Cost $4.95
Monarch Press, a division of
Simon & Schuster
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Teaching the Gifted Child
By James Gallagher. Cost $12.95
Allyn & Bacon
Rockleigh, NJ 06747

Gifted Child Quarterly
Cost $20.00
NAGC
217 Gregory Drive
Hot Springs, AR 71901

G/C/T (Gifted, Creative, Talented Child)
Cost $12.50
G/C/T Publishing Co.
Box 66654
Mobile, AL 36606

Parents Organizing to Improve Schools
By Happy Fernandez. Cost $1.50
National Committee for Citizens in Education
Suite 410, Wilde Lake Village Green
Columbia, MD 21044

Office of the Gifted and Talented
United States Office of Education
Donahoe Building, Room 3827
6th and D Street, Southwest
Washington, DC 20202

National/State Leadership Training Institute on the Gifted and Talented
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WISCONSIN MONOGRAPHS

ON

EDUCATION OF THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

MONOGRAPH #4

THE GIFTED AND TALENTED

Starting a Program

Screening and Identification

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These monographs were prepared by the Department of Public Instruction in collaboration with the Wisconsin Association of Educators of Gifted and Talented. The views presented are those of the major author(s) of each monograph and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Department of Public Instruction. The set of monographs, which may be expanded later, presently includes the following:

#1 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Who Are They?
Why Do They Need Special Programs?

#2 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Staff Involvement

#3 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Parent Involvement

#4 THE GIFTED AND TALENTED
Starting a Program
Screening and Identification

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STARTING A PROGRAM FOR THE GIFTED

The first impulse in responding to a request on how to set up a program for gifted and talented children in a sequential, step-by-step fashion is to reply by presenting a blank page. The message, of course, is that there is no one formula or plan of action that will insure successful development and implementation of a gifted and talented program. In fact, what may be a very successful method for beginning a program in one school district may have less than desirable results for another school district. There are many documented instances of successful and unsuccessful programs that began as a mandate from an administrator, from a group of interested teachers, or from concerns raised by a parent group.

Rejecting a sequential step-by-step approach to developing a gifted and talented program does not imply that principles of program development are not to be heeded. Persons interested in and responsible for developing a gifted and talented program must be aware of two main bodies of knowledge: (1) appropriate and defensible practices in gifted education and (2) the process of innovation and change. A sound theoretical and practical background in gifted and talented education is essential for anyone who is responsible for implementing such a program. If this is lacking, there is a chance of developing a program which will not really meet the needs of gifted and talented students. The second area, examining education from the perspective of a change agent, can be easily overlooked. For many reasons, the urgency to begin a program, the enthusiasm of the persons working in the program, or inexperience on the part of the people directing or coordinating the program, the principles of successful innovation are ignored. It should be noted that programs and innovations are often adopted not for what they are but for how they are introduced. This section will present

some ways in which a person starting a program can serve as an effective change agent.

Regardless of the role or position of the person who is interested in getting a gifted and talented program started (administrator, teacher, parent), there are basically four ways in which this person can act to facilitate the implementation of the gifted and talented program. That person can be:

1) a catalyst
2) a solution giver
3) a process helper
4) a resource linker

THE CATALYST

There is usually resistance to change. Most of the time people do not want to change; they want to keep things the way they are. For that reason, that important beginning for a gifted and talented program is that many people are presented with information about gifted and talented students and their needs. The function of persons who act as catalysts is to create a dissatisfaction with the "status quo" and establish a feeling that more could be done for these students. It is important to recognize that any individual or group can act as a catalyst. The administrator might put features and articles on gifted education in the staff newsletter; a parents' group might sponsor awareness and informational talks; or a group of interested teachers might share material from a gifted and talented workshop that they have attended. Each group should think reasonably about the steps that need to be followed to win support for gifted and talented education and to reduce the resistance. Unless persons from other groups see the need for change or feel the dissatisfaction with the present system of educating gifted and talented students, the chances of beginning a successful gifted and talented program have been reduced.

THE PROCESS HELPER

After creating a felt need to act on behalf of gifted and talented students,

a very important role for persons beginning a gifted and talented program is that of process helper in terms of the problem solving that takes place in response to this need. A needs assessment or survey of attitudes might be done, including the staff, administrators, students, and community. As a result, planning committees might be set up to make decisions concerning definition of gifted and talented students, identification procedures, and programming for these students. The process helper can assist by setting up and facilitating meetings suggesting objectives and goals, presenting evaluation procedures for gifted and talented programs, and insuring that all relevant groups are represented and participating in this process.

THE SOLUTION GIVER

After a decision to act has been made and the problem has been defined, the next stage in developing a gifted and talented program is a search for programmatic alternatives. It is at this point that a strong background in gifted education becomes very important for persons who are developing the gifted and talented program. There are different approaches that a school district can use to meet the needs of its gifted population and the role of the solution giver is to provide information and to suggest approaches which are practical for the school district. Changes in the curriculum, a resource room for gifted and talented students, and an itinerant teacher for the gifted are some of the "solutions" that might be considered. Visits to other projects and meetings with students, teachers, and administrators are often helpful as one searches and examines other models.

THE RESOURCE LINKER

A large part of successfully developing a gifted and talented program is exchange. Application and implementation of the program model that has been decided upon for a particular school or school district requires the matching of resources to needs. Knowing what resources, including people, are available is an important function of the resource linker.

Some additional points about starting a gifted program and the ways in which a person can facilitate this process include the following:

1) Any of the four roles can be carried out by an administrator, teacher or parent;
2) The four roles are not mutually exclusive and often overlap;
3) These four roles can be used effectively by a person either as an "insider" or an "outsider".

DEFINITION

One aspect of gifted and talented education which a school district faces early into its commitment to provide differentiated programming is to determine which students will be served. Definitions differ widely and the decision must be made in terms of the goals and resources of each district.

In reviewing definitions of giftedness, some common attributes appear often. Demonstrated or assumed high ability, consistent high performance, and ability to create are components which appear in most definitions. It seems to be generally accepted in Wisconsin that definition will include intellectual ability, ability in the visual and performing arts, and psychosocial ability. This represents a useful abbreviation of the definition which appears in the 1971 Report to Congress.[1]

IDENTIFICATION

After acceptance of a definition which will be used locally, identification must be planned. Identification consists of a series of carefully articulated steps, the first of which is screening. Screening will probably require pulling together all of the information available in school records plus other information as well.

[1] Sidney Marland, Education of the Gifted and Talented (report to the sub-committee on Education, Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 1972) p. 3.

A minimal screening procedure would include the following:

Group tests of intelligence

Group tests of achievement

Creativity tests

School grades

Teacher judgment and nomination

Parent judgment and nomination

Peer nomination

Self nomination

Study of pupil products--art, writing, and other

All of the information listed above plus any other relevant material should be carefully examined by a screening committee composed of teachers, administrators, psychologist, counselor, librarian, reading teacher, and any other personnel with first-hand knowledge of the nominated children. The composition of the committee will depend, of course, on the local situation. After careful study of the records of each child to be considered for the program, the screening committee will select those who seem to be the best candidates for special programming. This smaller group of children will be administered individual intelligence tests. A detailed case study will be developed on each one and the final group will be selected.

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

At the point where a child is screened into a program and before differentiated learning experiences take place, it is up to the teacher, with the help of the case study chairman, to assess the specific abilities, potential, and needs of the student. The student interview is helpful at this point. If interest inventories and self-esteem development of profiles were not administered during the case study, they could appropriately be used at this point. An individual educational plan (IEP) including long and short

range goals, teaching strategies and appropriate evaluation criteria might be developed for each student in the program.

COUNSELING

The final and one of the most important components of a program based on student needs is appropriate guidance and counseling. It must be remembered that gifted children are, first of all, children with all the needs of other children plus some very special needs related to their superior abilities. The opportunity for guidance and counseling on a regular basis must be available. Provision must also be made for communication between counselors and teachers.